

# Career Tech Matters

by Dennis Franks • Feb. 2, 2018

Taking crime scene photos is not the usual precursor for a career in education, but it was for science teacher Chris Cecil.



Chris was working as a forensics investigator for the Griffin Police Department, about 40 miles south of Atlanta, when he was shot at a crime scene.

After 13 years with the police department, Chris decided to pursue another career.

Initially, Chris had planned to be an accountant. He earned a degree in business administration and worked in that field for three years in Wilmington, Ohio.

But when he was made aware of a job opportunity in Georgia, he decided to pursue it and was hired as a crime scene photographer, going on to earn his license as an investigator.

"I loved what I did but I was a single dad with three kids," he said.

After he was shot, Chris decided to move back home to Ironton, Ohio, to be near family while he returned to school again to earn a bachelor's of science in education.

"I'd been putting kids behind bars. Why not shift careers? Maybe I can prevent kids from going down that pathway of destruction," Chris said of choosing to teach.

"Science meshed well with my forensics background," he said. "And I knew I wanted to teach high school students."

Chris has been teaching for seven years, working at a parochial school and a charter school before joining Pickaway-Ross in 2014.

Chris said that he believes in career-tech education.



Science teacher Chris Cecil said he enjoys making a difference in the lives of his students.

"This was an opportunity to take kids who were career-focused and better prepare them for the future," he said. "Career tech gives them hope and a sense of direction."

Outside of the classroom, Chris is helping provide direction as a SkillsUSA co-advisor with Rex Cockrell, Tea McCaulla and Donna Patrick, and is serving as state advisor for the student organization.

Ohio's chapter is the third largest in the nation. In addition to being the go-to person for local chapter advisors in the South Central region, he oversees a lot of behind-the-scenes hands-on work to make the state chapter look good, Chris said.

Last month, Chris took student officers from six regions to Washington, D.C., where they advocated for career-technical education. The visit helps teach the officers how to be effective leaders.

A highlight for Chris was the opportunity to sit down with Sen. Rob Portman and talk about Perkins funding, which is up for renewal.

"We had a discussion about how important this funding is to prepare students for the work force."

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*Dennis Franks is superintendent of Pickaway-Ross Career & Technology Center. He can be reached at [dennis.franks@pickawayross.com](mailto:dennis.franks@pickawayross.com).*